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ABSTRACT

This checklist is intended for beginning teachers, transfer teachers, school administrators, mentors, teacher educators, and student teachers. Seven sections focus on "Getting Acquainted" (instructional resources; community facilities and resources; the school district; school rules, procedures, and policies; school personnel, services, and facilities; the classroom; and the students); "Making Management Preparations" (organizing materials, classroom helpers, class lists and rosters, school-home communication, birthdays and other celebrations, and distributing textbooks); "Determining Procedures and Rules"; "Making Instructional Preparations" (weekly time schedules, long-range plans, motivating students, planning for lesson plans, daily lesson plans, preparing a syllabus and policy sheets, tentative student assessment, determining grading policy, planning for homework, backup activities, opening class routine, and folder for substitute teachers); "Planning for the First Day"; "Organizing Your Classroom and Materials" (room identification, desk arrangements, seat selection and name tags, room arrangement, and room decoration); and "The Final Check" (have those materials ready and final check). An annotated bibliography includes 25 references in the areas of beginning the school year, classroom management and discipline, and motivating students. (SM)

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Countdown to the First Day of School: A K-12 Get Ready Checklist

Leo M. Schell

Paul R. Burden

ED 467 779

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Leo M. Schell is Professor Emeritus at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, where he taught for 31 years. A specialist in reading instruction, he published three books and numerous articles on the topic. Late in his professorial career, he immersed himself in the supervision of field experiences and of student teaching. One result of this immersion was several published articles and two monographs on this topic.

Paul R. Burden is a professor and an assistant dean in the College of Education at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, where he has supervised student teachers and taught courses on classroom management and discipline, teaching methods, and instructional leadership. Previously, he was a middle-level science teacher. His other books include *Powerful Classroom Management Strategies: Motivating Students to Learn* (2000, Corwin Press), *Methods for Effective Teaching* (1999, Allyn & Bacon), *Classroom Management and Discipline* (1995, Longman), and *Establishing Career Ladders in Teaching* (1987, Charles C. Thomas). He can be reached at (785) 532-5550 or at burden@ksu.edu.

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Introduction

Beginning teachers are faced with an overwhelming variety of professional challenges, particularly during the first few days of school. They are expected to enter the classroom equipped with (1) a thorough familiarity with their environment—its facilities, its personnel, and its policies and procedures; (2) a classroom management system that includes ways to prevent and to address student misbehavior; (3) a fair and an efficient system for student assessment; and (4) long-range and short-range instructional plans that meet curriculum standards and acknowledge students' varied abilities, interests, and backgrounds.

These are intimidating, yet mandatory, expectations. Classroom organization and management during the first few days of school, to a great degree, determine teacher expectations/standards, student achievement, behavior patterns, and procedures that will persist throughout the school year.

In fact, much of the instructional and social interaction that occurs throughout the school year can be traced directly or indirectly to the way teachers initially establish instructional and social systems during the first days of school. Because these first few days are so important, new teachers should engage in extensive planning and decision making before school starts.

Why and How Was This Checklist Prepared?

Some school districts have tried to help new teachers: become familiar with school rules and procedures, facilities, and resources; plan for instruction; select instructional strategies; and manage student behavior. To achieve these goals, school districts have offered induction programs such as orientation workshops at the start of the year for all beginning teachers, and mentoring programs.

Unfortunately, many school districts lack the funds and personnel needed to implement effective induction programs. In an effort to develop a resource for these districts and for beginning teachers, we surveyed 300 experienced teachers in a wide variety of districts throughout Kansas and asked them to list the crucial things an inexperienced teacher should do before the first day of school. Their suggestions were the basis for the content of the first edition of this booklet.

As we prepared this second edition, we wanted to provide guidance for K-12 teachers. Therefore, we had a number of K-12 teachers critique the first edition and offer suggestions for improvement. In addition, we consulted the research literature on beginning teachers. As a result, the content in this checklist is organized into six categories: (1) Getting Acquainted; (2) Making Management Preparations; (3) Determining Procedures and Rules; (4) Making Instructional Preparations; (5) Planning for the First Day; and (6) Organizing Your Classroom and Materials. We have also included an annotated bibliography for those who would like to strengthen their knowledge in three important areas of concern for beginners: (1) Beginning the School Year, (2) Classroom Management and Discipline, and (3) Motivating Students.

Who Can Benefit from This Checklist?

The get-ready checklist was created primarily for beginning teachers. However, the content can be used in various ways by transfer teachers, school administrators and mentors, college professors responsible for training new teachers, and student teachers and other preservice teachers.

Beginning Teachers

This get-ready checklist is designed, first and foremost, to help beginning teachers thoroughly prepare themselves for their new jobs. Most of the issues can be addressed in the weeks before school starts.

Teacher Transfers

Teacher transfers who are about to enter a new learning environment will find that many of the checklist preparations will make their transition a smoother one. The section on getting acquainted with the community, district, and school should be particularly helpful.

School Administrators and Mentors

School administrators and mentors will find this booklet helpful in their efforts to orient and guide new teachers. However, they should not just hand out the booklet and decide that orientation objectives have been met. Administrators should sit down with new teachers, review some of the most essential tasks, and see that the teachers have adequately planned for them. Likewise, mentors or experienced teachers should help beginning teachers with these tasks. For example, they could help new teachers:

- Formulate a daily and weekly schedule.
- Determine the capabilities of specific children and the class as a whole, and discuss how these capabilities might relate to instruction.
- Develop long-range plans and skeleton plans, and suggest possible learning activities or resources in the school or community that fit into these plans.
- Arrange specific opportunities for new teachers to see other personnel in working and non-working situations.
- Develop a student assessment system.

Teacher Educators

Teacher educators could use the information contained in this checklist as the basis for revising course content and field experiences. For example, field experiences could be broadened to show students how to become acquainted with the school, the district, and the community and also how to prepare for substitute teachers as well as that exhilarating, nerve-racking first day of teaching on their own. All of these areas are covered in the get-ready checklist.

Student/Preservice Teachers

Teacher education courses and field experiences often do not prepare students for the unique circumstances that new teachers must deal with at the start of their first year of teaching. This get-ready checklist can be used to inform aspiring teachers of issues they must consider before their first year of teaching, such as devising classroom rules and a student assessment system.

When Should This Checklist Be Used?

If a beginning teacher is hired in the spring or early summer, this checklist could be used in June through August when preparing for the start of school. This way, all the steps could be completed over a number of weeks. The content in the checklist is sequenced in the general order in which the issues should be addressed, although individual variation is possible.

However, this get-ready checklist can also be used on short notice by teachers hired late in the summer or even just days before school starts. A number of the issues in this book can be addressed even without knowing the specific grade level and/or subject areas the teacher will be handling. For example, a teacher can make decisions and plans about classroom helpers, school-home communication, and even classroom management before being hired.

How Should This Checklist Be Used?

All users should first read the table of contents and then rapidly read through the handbook to get a feel for its contents and potential uses. Then users may begin to implement individual sections.

The individual sections of this handbook can be worked on in any sequence depending upon the user's situation or preferences. As each item is completed, it should be checked so yet-to-be completed items are evident.

GETTING ACQUAINTED

Your first step in preparing for the school year is to become thoroughly familiar with your new teaching environment. This environment includes (1) instructional resources; (2) community facilities and resources; (3) the school district; (4) school rules, procedures, and policies; (5) school personnel, services, and facilities; (6) your classroom; and (7) your students.

The more knowledgeable you are about each of these areas, the more confident you will feel about your job and the less time you'll need to devote to these areas during the first few weeks of school when time is at a premium.

check ✓ when completed

Instructional Resources

❑ **1** Learn about school district and/or school philosophy, goals, or outcomes and think about how they may influence your teaching and the type of instructional materials you use.

❑ **2** Obtain and study copies of assigned and available student textbooks and workbooks and/or teacher's guides to determine:

- ▶ Basic instructional goals
- ▶ Subject matter to be taught
- ▶ Scope and sequence of skills to be taught
- ▶ Possible instructional strategies and learning activities
- ▶ Possible instructional materials you could make
- ▶ Available tests or other assessment instruments
- ▶ Breadth of instruction—remedial, enrichment, review
- ▶ Possible overlap with or integration of curricular areas

❑ **3** Ask whether there are school, district, or state curriculum guides that pertain to you. Examine them to learn:

- ▶ General instructional goals
- ▶ Instructional topics
- ▶ Scope and sequence of skills to be taught
- ▶ Suggested instructional activities
- ▶ Their relationship to goals proposed by professional organizations

❑ **4** Learn what general resources are available at school to supplement textbooks and workbooks. Resources include:

- ▶ Supplementary aids that accompany textbooks
- ▶ Library and/or media resources

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- ▶ Technology (hardware and software)
- ▶ Web sites, Internet sources
- ▶ Math manipulatives
- ▶ Lab equipment and supplies

❑ **5** Many states have mandated assessments. Ask about the format and content of these tests so your instruction can correspond to them.

❑ **6** For each curricular area, make an outline of specific topics you must cover during the year. See the section on "Making Instructional Preparations" on page 37. Some districts have "curriculum cards" or curriculum guides that provide this content outline for the entire course.

❑ **7** Ask about any special or experimental programs that you *must* or may incorporate into instructional time. These may include programs such as career education, economic education, and technology skills.

❑ **8** Find out how to order extra supplies and instructional materials.

Community Facilities and Resources

❑ **1** Investigate resource facilities in the community that can enrich your students' learning experiences. Many communities have more than you might expect. Ask fellow teachers, administrators, parents, and neighbors about appropriate community resources to tap. Look for:

- ▶ Museums, historic sites, libraries, and businesses (especially those near the school for a walking field trip)
- ▶ Places of business that could give tours, such as banks, industries, post offices, dairies, orchards, airports, lumberyards, grocery stores, and newspaper plants.

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- ▶ Local colleges or universities that provide lectures, performances, or facilities.
- ▶ Organizations such as a local historical society or a Chamber of Commerce.

❑ **2** Ask fellow teachers, administrators, parents, and neighbors for suggestions about people in the community who can provide services to supplement your instruction. These resource people may include:

- ▶ Citizens with vocational knowledge such as county-extension agents, mechanics, accountants, florists, salespersons, masons, equipment operators, meteorologists, veterinarians, law-enforcement officers, attorneys, and bankers
- ▶ Collectors of all sorts
- ▶ Owners of unusual pets
- ▶ Local artists and craftspersons
- ▶ Astronomy buffs

❑ **3** Match potential classroom visitors and field trips with major curricular topics.

The School District

❑ **1** Ask for a map of the school district. You may want to drive through the neighborhoods of the school district.

❑ **2** Learn about:

- ▶ The amount and range of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity
- ▶ The range of socioeconomic levels within the district
- ▶ Degree of transiency in the community
- ▶ Charter, private, magnet and/or parochial schools; who attends these schools and how this affects your enrollment

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❑ **3** Find out how much time the students spend on a bus coming to school. This may help you estimate how early they have to get up, how early they should go to bed, or what chores or responsibilities they have before they get to school.

School Rules, Procedures, and Policies

Much of the information in this section may be included in an orientation meeting for new teachers or in a school or district handbook. If so, become thoroughly acquainted with it.

❑ **1** Learn about personnel policies that relate to you.

- ▶ Sick days
- ▶ Personal leave
- ▶ Dress code
- ▶ Individual plans for staff development
- ▶ Paycheck dates and distribution
- ▶ Health insurance

❑ **2** Learn exactly what your responsibilities and duties are concerning:

- ▶ Playground duty
- ▶ Lunchroom duty
- ▶ Hall-monitor duty
- ▶ Lunch-money collection
- ▶ Bus loading/unloading
- ▶ Open houses
- ▶ PTA/PTO meetings
- ▶ Committee membership
- ▶ Extracurricular activities, such as clubs, organizations, and athletics
- ▶ School assemblies
- ▶ Planning time
- ▶ Parent/teacher conferences

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❑ **3** Know school procedures and policies that concern the actions of the students, such as:

- ▶ Hall passes
- ▶ Tardies
- ▶ Student absences and attendance
- ▶ Students who arrive early in the morning
- ▶ Student illness or injury during school
- ▶ Dismissal procedures
- ▶ Fire, earthquake, and tornado drills
- ▶ Bomb threats
- ▶ Emergency procedures
- ▶ Security guards/officers, metal detectors, and security cameras
- ▶ Use of tools and equipment
- ▶ Discipline—what is prohibited, what is permissible, and under what conditions
- ▶ Classroom parties and field trips
- ▶ Lunchroom rules
- ▶ Restroom rules
- ▶ Playground rules
- ▶ School-bus rules
- ▶ Dress-code standards

❑ **4** Learn about school procedures and policies that directly concern you and your teaching, such as:

- ▶ Teacher aides and classroom volunteers
- ▶ Faculty and departmental meetings
- ▶ Scheduled evaluation observations by administrators
- ▶ Use of school telephone
- ▶ Mail delivery
- ▶ "Chain of command" to follow in case of complaint
- ▶ Discretionary money for instructional purposes
- ▶ Staff development programs
- ▶ Mandated testing (the kind of tests and dates)
- ▶ Documentation of classroom incidents

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- ▶ Lesson plan requirements
- ▶ Student records to be kept and forms to be filed
- ▶ Collecting money from students (when it is permissible and how it should be done)
- ▶ Reservation and check-out procedures for instructional media
- ▶ Computer availability and use
- ▶ E-mail

School Personnel, Services, and Facilities

❑ **1** Request a mentor teacher or the name of an experienced teacher who can answer some of your questions and assist you both before school starts and throughout the year. *Asking for help, ideas, or affirmation indicates professionalism, not weakness.*

❑ **2** Learn about administrative, teaching, and support personnel within the school and the services they provide, such as:

- ▶ Principal and Assistant Principal
- ▶ All teachers
- ▶ Grade-level or subject-matter colleagues
- ▶ Librarian/media center director
- ▶ Computer lab technician
- ▶ Paraeducators/teacher aides
- ▶ Nurse
- ▶ Secretaries
- ▶ Custodians
- ▶ Security officers
- ▶ Teachers' union representative
- ▶ Media director
- ▶ School psychologist

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- ▶ Social worker
- ▶ Reading-resource teacher
- ▶ School counselors
- ▶ Bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher
- ▶ Speech therapist
- ▶ Special education teacher
- ▶ Gifted student facilitator
- ▶ Vocal/instrumental music teacher
- ▶ Art teacher

❑ **3** Learn about special school services for students from low-income families such as the following:

- ▶ Breakfast and lunch programs
- ▶ Medical or dental help
- ▶ Clothing distribution
- ▶ After-school tutoring programs

❑ **4** Become acquainted with the school buildings, equipment, and grounds, such as:

- ▶ School office
- ▶ Faculty parking lot
- ▶ Teachers' lounge
- ▶ Photocopy and computer facilities
- ▶ Cafeteria
- ▶ Media center
- ▶ Health clinic
- ▶ Building telephones
- ▶ Rooms for special classes—music, remedial reading, speech therapy, computer instruction, and so on
- ▶ Storage rooms
- ▶ Recess areas
- ▶ Fire alarms and extinguishers
- ▶ Emergency exits

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Your Classroom

- ❑ **1** Determine the number of assigned students.
- ❑ **2** Examine, organize, and inventory all school-issued textbooks, workbooks, and school supplies. When possible, restock where needed.
- ❑ **3** Check out storage areas available for additional supplementary materials. (Organizing these areas comes later; see page 25.)
- ❑ **4** Take note of desk styles (yours and students') as well as the presence of bookcases, display tables, and special equipment such as computers. (Actual room arrangement comes later; see page 59.)
- ❑ **5** Check with the school secretary if you need extra equipment (filing cabinet, table, etc.).
- ❑ **6** In your classroom, gather the instructional materials you located earlier, and any supplementary materials you may have at home. These may include:
  - ▶ Books for an in-room library
  - ▶ Pre-made bulletin boards
  - ▶ Computer hardware and software
  - ▶ Games and devices
  - ▶ Videotapes
  - ▶ Visual aids (photographs, posters, illustrations)
  - ▶ Cassette tapes
  - ▶ Seatwork sheets
  - ▶ Ideas for activities
  - ▶ Charts, maps, graphs
  - ▶ Playground games
  - ▶ Indoor-recess games
- ❑ **7** Determine whether colleagues have resources you don't have but which you may share.
- ❑ **8** Practice using any computers in your room, including successfully running any software you and/or students may later use.

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❑ **9** Ask whether you have any discretionary money with which to purchase other supplementary materials. If so, acquire some quality materials by:

- ▶ Checking school supply catalogs that your school has on hand
- ▶ Visiting a local teacher supply store
- ▶ Checking out garage sales for inexpensive paperback books and other resources

Your Students

❑ **1** Learn as much as possible about your students, individually, as a class, as a school, and as a district. Talk with administrators and colleagues. (Refer to the section on "The School District" on page 15.)

❑ **2** Examine the cumulative record folders for each student or randomly selected students, depending upon the number of students/classes you teach.

- ▶ Make a list of students' names, if possible.
- ▶ Examine any school photographs that may be enclosed.
- ▶ Look for information about the family/home situation. Note names of parents/guardians. Don't assume these people have the same last name as the student.
- ▶ Note any outstanding strengths, weaknesses, interests, and talents—both academic and nonacademic.
- ▶ Record the student's birthday on a room calendar if you will be celebrating birthdays at your grade level.
- ▶ Notice whether students were enrolled in any special programs for learning disabilities, speech therapy, gifted education, and so on.
- ▶ Make note of any chronic health problems, including allergies.

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- ▶ Note any students with special needs—which subjects they will be in your room for and specific needs they may have.
- ▶ Determine if there are any students who, for religious reasons (a) cannot participate in some school activities or have some restrictions on them (for example, adherents of some religions don't take part in the flag salute; some don't use medical services or physicians; some don't observe the religious aspect of Christmas); or (b) will participate in some religious holidays or activities that other children won't, such as Yom Kippur and Passover (Jewish) or Ramadan (Muslim).

❑ **3** Keep an open mind about the students as you read their folders. Try not to let negative or unusual information lead to negative opinions about students. Use all information to help you design instruction that recognizes each student's strengths, background, and personal learning needs.

❑ **4** Estimate the academic range, mean, and composition of the class. Use this data to tentatively answer questions such as:

- ▶ Is the group about average in reading (math, spelling, and so on)?
- ▶ Is there a larger than expected number of high or low achievers? What adaptations might be needed to address this range of ability levels?
- ▶ Will grade-level texts and supplementary materials be appropriate?
- ▶ Are there any students with disabilities who require special consideration?

❑ **5** Prepare a file folder for each student in which you store room records, work samples, and other information throughout the year. (Some teachers have each student design their own folder during the first few days of school.)

Even before creating lesson plans, you can consider a number of non-instructional issues that will help manage the students and the classroom environment. These issues include organizing instructional materials, classroom helpers, class lists and rosters, home-school communication, birthdays and other celebrations, and distributing textbooks.

Even though none of these issues directly relates to instruction, each needs your attention. Thinking about these issues prior to the start of school will help create a more orderly classroom and promote a smooth transition in the opening days of the school year.

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Organizing Materials

❑ **1** Establish a filing system for your instructional plans, notes, and student handouts and tests. A separate file folder can be created for each course unit to hold pertinent notes and resource materials.

❑ **2** Set up a filing system for storing district and school communications. These include:

- ▶ Policy Handbook
- ▶ Information from faculty meetings and department meetings
- ▶ Correspondence from your principal, superintendent, and other supervisors
- ▶ Correspondence from professional organizations
- ▶ Copies of any notes sent to or received from your students' parents/guardians

❑ **3** Store supplementary materials on shelves, in boxes, or in file drawers according to curricular areas.

Classroom Helpers

❑ **1** Determine whether you want student helpers. If so, determine what tasks students can be responsible for, how you will select helpers, and how long a student will hold a particular job. Have a job chart ready on the first day. Consider tasks such as:

- ▶ School messenger
- ▶ Attendance recorder
- ▶ Lunch count recorder
- ▶ Line leader
- ▶ Light switcher
- ▶ Classroom librarian
- ▶ Plant waterer
- ▶ Playground-equipment manager
- ▶ Pet tenders

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❑ **2** Think about how task assignments will be rotated to provide your students an opportunity to help. Roles are often held one or two weeks before assignments are rotated.

❑ **3** Secondary school student aides are sometimes available for a single class period or for an ongoing regular time. Create a contract that lists possible duties (e.g., filing, grading, recording grades, attendance, computer work, errands) and expectations (e.g., privacy, confidentiality, promptness, accuracy, dependability).

❑ **4** Determine whether you want to use adult helpers such as paraeducators or volunteer parents. If so, decide what roles they may serve and determine guidelines and expectations for them. Consult your principal or mentor teacher for suggestions.

Class Lists and Rosters

❑ **1** Prepare a class roster that has a place for student names on the left and six or eight blank columns on the right. Make several copies to use for recording items such as:

- Textbook checkout
- Assignments
- Skills mastery
- Book orders
- Picture money
- Field trip permission slips
- Phone calls made to parents

❑ **2** Don't record names and other information in your grade book for at least one full week; some students may be switched to other rooms and/or transfer students may enter school several days late.

❑ **3** Consider asking each student to fill out a student profile card with information such as: full name, names of parents/guardians, home address, work and home phone, birth date, bus route, any allergies,

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and any regular medications taken. Include any activity (e.g., sports, drama) that may cause them to miss class. You might also ask them to include important or interesting personal information they wish to share. Students can fill out their own cards.

School-Home Communication

❑ **1** Prepare materials to send home with the students on the first day (letter to parents, classroom rules, and student profile cards).

❑ **2** Consider preparing an introductory letter for parents/guardians. This letter could be sent home with students during their first week of school or distributed at a Back-To-School Night if your school has one the first week. Don't overwhelm parents/guardians; keep the letter brief. Make the letter specific to your room. The letter might include:

- ▶ Something about your background
- ▶ Some information about the content for the year and your approach to instruction
- ▶ An explanation of your assessment/grading system
- ▶ Your policy on homework
- ▶ Supplies needed
- ▶ Special school dates/events
- ▶ An invitation for parents/guardians to share their information or skills with your pupils, when and if appropriate
- ▶ An open invitation for parents/guardians to visit your classroom
- ▶ Your sincere desire for good school-home communication throughout the year
- ▶ The school phone number and your extension, and possibly your home phone number in the event parents/guardians need to contact you.

❑ **3** If your school has an Open House or Back-To-School Night, consider what you want to share.

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This may include much of the information in the previous item, but also a syllabus, an overview of the curriculum, your instructional strategies, an assessment procedure, and academic and behavioral expectations.

❑ **4** Also consider periodically sending a progress report home other than the report card. Recognize, however, that you may not take many grades in the first couple weeks of school. Refer to progress on achieving objectives. If you decide to send home a weekly progress report during the first few weeks, design its basic layout now. The report could:

- ▶ Note positive accomplishments
- ▶ Include a brief checklist of work habits or level of accomplishments
- ▶ Require that a parent or guardian sign the note and return it through the student the following school day. You might have "Friday Folders" where all papers for the week go home with the student to be signed by the parent/guardian and returned.

Birthdays and Other Celebrations

❑ **1** Decide whether you want to celebrate birthdays in your classroom. Primary students and, to a lesser degree, intermediate grade students like this recognition.

❑ **2** Consider posting a monthly calendar with birthdays and possibly other information on it.

❑ **3** Decide when to celebrate birthdays that fall on weekends or holidays or during the summer.

- ▶ Weekend and holiday birthdays could be celebrated the following school day.
- ▶ Summer birthdays could be celebrated on one's "six-month" birthday.

check when completed

❑ **4** Plan how you want to celebrate birthdays.

- ▶ Consult your principal or school handbook on party policies, including refreshments.
- ▶ Determine whether you want to present each child with a small gift, such as a pencil or bookmark. If so, purchase the objects now, in bulk.
- ▶ Determine whether you want to grant special birthday privileges, such as being first in line all day, getting to choose a book for shared reading, sharing special snacks from home, and so on.

❑ **5** Most schools have specific policies for celebrating certain holidays, such as Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Easter, and Passover. Inquire about these policies, so that you understand what is expected.

Distributing Textbooks

❑ **1** Decide when to distribute textbooks. Because the first day of school often includes announcements and activities, you might want to wait until the second or third day, or even just before the first time they are used.

❑ **2** Decide how to efficiently distribute the textbooks.

- ▶ Use an inventory form to record the book number and the student's name.
- ▶ Decide on a procedure to distribute the books (e.g., students come up one row at a time, then you record the book number and student's name).

Classroom discipline is an important concern of all teachers, and effective use of classroom procedures and rules can minimize the chance for student misbehavior.

PROCEDURES are approved ways to help students accomplish specific tasks. Procedures increase the shared understanding for an activity between you and the students, reduce the complexity of the classroom environment to a predictable structure, and allow for efficient use of time. Before school starts, think about aspects of your classroom when you want a standard way for students to complete a task, and then decide the exact procedure you want the students to follow.

RULES are general behavioral standards or expectations used to regulate individual behavior and to avoid disruptive behavior. It is important to decide ahead of time, before school starts, what your plan will be to deal with misbehavior.

When students misbehave, you must be ready to deliver appropriate consequences to get them back on task. Give careful attention to the rules you would like to have in your classroom and the consequences that you will deliver if students follow or break the rules.

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Classroom Procedures

- ❑ **1** Formulate a way to begin and end the day/class period.
- ❑ **2** Decide on procedures to use in certain areas of your classroom, such as:
  - ▶ Student desks and storage areas for belongings
  - ▶ Storage for class materials used by all students
  - ▶ Pencil sharpener, waste basket
  - ▶ Computer areas, learning stations, equipment areas
- ❑ **3** Decide on procedures for students entering or leaving the classroom
  - ▶ Beginning and ending of the day
  - ▶ Leaving the room
  - ▶ Returning to the room
- ❑ **4** Decide on out-of-room procedures
  - ▶ Hall passes to leave the room
  - ▶ Lockers
  - ▶ Cafeteria
  - ▶ Playground
- ❑ **5** Decide on procedures for activities and seatwork
  - ▶ Signals for student attention
  - ▶ Talk among students
  - ▶ Student movement in and out of any groups
  - ▶ Distributing books, supplies, and materials
  - ▶ Requesting help from the teacher
  - ▶ Gathering and returning assignments
- ❑ **6** Decide on procedures to begin the day/class period.
  - ▶ Taking attendance and lunch count
  - ▶ Late students
  - ▶ Expected student behavior during this opening time

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❑ **7** Plan some method for collecting students' assignments. Ask your mentor or a colleague for advice.

- ▶ Designate one basket where students can place completed work.
- ▶ In an open area, place individual baskets, folders, large envelopes, or mailboxes made from cardboard boxes (one per child) where students can store notes to parents, assessed work, and any other materials that should go home at the end of the day.
- ▶ If students change classes hourly, design a system accordingly (e.g., separate baskets or different colored folders for each hourly class).

❑ **8** Decide how you want to have students label their papers (name, date, and class period) and how you want them to turn papers in (e.g. a tray or basket).

❑ **9** Determine whether the students should have an assignment book, a planner, or another way to keep track of their homework assignments and activities.

Rules

❑ **1** Check with your principal, grade-level team, or department to see whether there is a common discipline policy to be used in each classroom.

❑ **2** If your school does not have a common discipline policy, formulate a few concise rules for expected behavior in your classroom. Tell students what you want from them, even if it sounds obvious to you.

- ▶ Choose only rules you can't live without and are willing to enforce consistently.
- ▶ Consider having students help you identify the rules so they feel part of the process.
- ▶ State rules positively, e.g.:
  - ▶ Follow the teacher's directions.
  - ▶ Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
  - ▶ Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.

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- ❑ **3** Discuss the rationale for the rules with the students to ensure they understand and see the need for each rule.
- ❑ **4** Consider writing these rules on a poster for display and discussion on the first day of school.
- ❑ **5** Plan to state the rules with authority to clearly indicate boundaries for unacceptable behaviors. Be comfortable with your authority, but exercise it only to the degree needed.
- ❑ **6** Formulate ways to positively reinforce good behavior.
  - ▶ Have some reinforcers available, such as inexpensive stickers, awards, or fill-in notes to parents.
  - ▶ Consult other teachers for reinforcement ideas.
  - ▶ Set goals or standards and determine what good things will happen when these are followed or met. Plan to discuss these with students.
- ❑ **7** Formulate specific consequences for failure to follow rules, and plan to discuss those consequences with students on the first day of school.
  - ▶ The severity of the consequence should fit the misbehavior.
  - ▶ Include only those consequences that you are willing to implement consistently with all children.
  - ▶ Include one initial warning per rule infraction.
  - ▶ Consult experienced teachers and/or principal for their ideas and feedback on your ideas.
- ❑ **8** Decide on a series of responses you will use when students misbehave.
  - ▶ The consequence should be in proportion to the severity of the misbehavior (e.g., mild responses for mild behavior).

- Consider a series of mild, moderate, and severe responses to misbehavior.
  - Mild responses might include nonverbal responses such as hand signals to give directions, or simply standing near the student.
  - Mild responses might include verbal responses, such as calling on the student during the lesson, using humor, reminding students of the rules, giving the student choices to solve the misbehavior, or giving a reprimand.
  - Moderate responses might include loss of privileges, change of seat assignment, written reflections on the problem, time-out, detentions, contacting the parents, or visiting the principal.
  - Severe responses often involve contacting the principal and/or parents and may involve special behavioral contracts with students.

❑ **9** Prepare to be "tested" by at least one student the first day of school. Consult a mentor for suggestions, and visualize responding appropriately.

❑ **10** Visualize being calm and professional in trying situations.

❑ **11** Consider circumstances when you will need to involve others to address student misbehavior.

❑ **12** For secondary students, include academic and behavioral expectations in your syllabus of course requirements. Consider having a sheet which the parent/guardian must sign to acknowledge these policies. (See "Preparing a Syllabus and Policy Sheets" on page 45.)

❑ **13** Consult books on classroom management and discipline that are cited in this book's bibliography on page 68.

This and the next section, "Planning for the First Day," are the most important sections of this handbook. More than anything else, your instructional preparations will determine your classroom success.

It is easy for beginning teachers to fall into the "night-before-trap" in which they ask themselves two hours before bedtime, "What am I going to do in social studies/health/language arts tomorrow?" For these novices, teaching can quickly become routine, textbook-shackled, and possibly even disorganized. A crucial chapter may never get finished, important skills may never get mastered, worthwhile learning experiences may get ignored, and the special learning needs of individual students may go unattended. As a result, student learning suffers. And the teacher constantly feels harried, at loose ends, and perplexed.

By giving attention to a number of instructional issues *before* school starts, you will be better organized and prepared for instruction. You can make instructional preparations in your instructional planning, student assessment, syllabus and policy sheets, your grading policy, homework, motivation, back-up activities, and even in gathering materials for a substitute teacher.

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Weekly Time Schedules

❑ **1** For elementary classrooms, prepare a weekly time schedule that blocks time for each subject area of instruction.

- ▶ Schools may provide you with a basic time frame to use as a model. If not, ask your mentor, a colleague, or your principal to help you design one for your classroom.
- ▶ Include times for special teachers and activities in areas such as physical education, music, art, foreign language, and library.
- ▶ Include time for lunch, recesses, and afternoon cleanup.
- ▶ Include regular time, possibly daily, for individual instruction and assistance.

❑ **2** For middle and secondary classrooms, prepare a chart showing the classes you teach for each class period throughout the week.

❑ **3** Post the weekly schedule in your classroom. Post the class time schedule if students change hourly.

Long-Range Plans

❑ **1** Pull out the topic outlines for each curricular area you previously prepared in the "Instructional Resources" section of the checklist.

❑ **2** Use these outlines and all related texts and workbooks to make long-range schedules for each curricular area. See examples of skeleton, long-range plans on pages 40 and 41.

Skeleton, Long-Range Plan for Third Grade Social Studies

(First nine weeks)

Three Days Per Week—Monday, Wednesday, Friday

September 6	Introduction; overview
September 8	Map/globe review game
September 11	Chapter 1—Living in Communities* —Introduction
September 13	Write Chamber of Commerce for information
September 15	Lesson 1—Different Communities
September 18	"
September 20	What we know about our community
September 22	"
September 25	Write letters to pen pal school
September 27	"
September 29	Open
October 2	Chapter 2—Communities and Geography—Introduction
October 4	Lesson 1—Geography of the U.S.A. —Introduction
October 6	Lesson 1—Video of U.S. geography
October 9	Lesson 1—Map work
October 11	Columbus Day**
October 13	Open
October 16	Lesson 2—Caring for the Environment—Introduction
October 18	Pollution
October 20	Recycling
October 23	Role of local zoo (zoo resource person?)
October 25	Trip to zoo?
October 27	Open
October 30	Halloween**
November 1	Lesson 3—Citizenship in our community (voting)
November 3	Summarize/review Chapters 1 and 2

* Textbook has too many good ideas for all to be implemented. Select only the best.

**Will study Columbus and Halloween rather than the topic from the unit.

Skeleton, Long-Range Plan for High School Biology

(First nine weeks)

August 25	Introduction; Biology Brain Teaser
August 26	Chapter 1—Investigating Life
August 27	"
August 30	Chapter 2—What Is "Life"?
August 31	"
September 1	"
September 2	Chapter 3—Diversity of Life
September 3	"
September 6	No School; Labor Day
September 7	Chapter 4—The Beginning of Life
September 8	"
September 9	"
September 10	Open
September 13	Chapter 5—Cell Structure and Function
September 14	"
September 15	"
September 16	"
September 17	Computer Simulation
September 20	Chapter 5—Review? Test?
September 21	Chapter 6—Plants
September 22	"
September 23	"
September 24	Open
September 27	Chapter 7—Animals
September 28	"
September 29	"
September 30	"
October 1	Chapters 5, 6, and 7—Review? Test? Computer Simulation?
October 4	Open
October 5	Open
October 6	Chapter 8—Neither Plant nor Animal
October 7	"
October 8	No School—Inservice Day
October 11	Chapters 1-8 Summary/Review
October 12	Chapter 9—Microbes
October 13	"
October 14	"
October 15	Open

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❑ **3** In formulating these rough schedules, consider the following:

- Before doing too much, solicit advice from other teachers, particularly those who teach your same grade level or subject area.
- If it makes no difference where the topics fall in the school year, assign the topics you consider most important or most "teachable" early enough in the year so that you won't omit or slight them as time runs out. Note, however, that some topics are built upon previous ones and this prerequisite information must be covered first.
- Whenever possible, try to integrate curricula. For example, if curricula objectives for the year call for studying folktales in reading and also teaching folktale writing in language arts, then schedule these lessons during the same time period of the school year. Also, try to integrate some folktales into social studies lessons during this period as well.
- Take grading periods, holidays, and staff development days into consideration as you prepare long-range plans.
- Knowing what students have studied in each curricular area in the previous grade should help you determine how much time to spend on units/topics and possibly even how to teach children. Therefore, examine the curriculum for the previous grade to see how it might affect your long-range schedule.
- Be careful not to "overschedule" yourself. Leave some time for review near the end of each unit or chapter, for re-instruction in case skills aren't mastered the first time, and for any unexcused occurrences, such as school closings due to inclement weather.
- Allow yourself some flexibility. Don't expect these to be rigid plans.

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Motivating Your Students

- ❑ **1** Read books on motivating students that are listed in the bibliography of this book on page 69.
- ❑ **2** As you begin thinking about how you will plan lessons, build in the following motivational principles:
  - ▶ Intent—arouse the students' curiosity
  - ▶ Relevance—relate instruction to the students' personal needs and goals
  - ▶ Expectancy—help the students see that they can be successful in each activity
  - ▶ Satisfaction—help the students see what they have accomplished
- ❑ **3** Vary your instructional approach within each lesson.
- ❑ **4** Have students actively engaging in instructional activities often.

Planning for Lesson Plans

- ❑ **1** Start a file folder for each major topic in your long-range plans. Into it, put notes and ideas about how to teach this topic. Use these as the basis for future lesson plans.
- ❑ **2** Include a variety of ideas such as:
  - ▶ Whole-class, group, and individual activities
  - ▶ Possible instructional materials
  - ▶ How to introduce topics or units
  - ▶ How to conclude topics or units
  - ▶ Assignments/projects/learning experiences
  - ▶ Resource people, field trips, etc.
  - ▶ Bulletin boards
  - ▶ Assessment ideas
  - ▶ Possible curricular integration

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- ▶ Special material that would be beneficial
- ▶ Appropriate homework
- ▶ Home-school communication

❑ **3** As always, consider asking a mentor/colleague for feedback and suggestions.

Daily Lesson Plans

❑ **1** Expand your skeleton plan and topic/unit folders for the first week of school into daily lesson plans. Keep these pointers in mind:

- ▶ For each lesson plan, specify objectives, instructional activities and tasks, and the means of assessment.
- ▶ You may want to keep instruction rather traditional until you are confident you have established adequate student control.
- ▶ Keep all lessons within the set time limits in your weekly time schedule.

❑ **2** Record your lesson plans in the format that may be required by your school.

❑ **3** Since most beginning teachers are required to submit their lesson plans to the principal for review prior to instruction, lesson plans often need to be prepared about a week ahead.

❑ **4** When planning, ponder how to manage and even minimize paperwork. There are so many first-week demands that you don't want to be swamped by grading papers.

❑ **5** Consider designing assessment tools such as rubrics and tests before beginning to plan daily lessons—this will help you stay focused on the objectives as you plan content, activities, and instructional tasks.

❑ **6** Always overplan so you don't have open time at the end of class, especially for the first week or two. (See "Back-Up Activities" on page 48.)

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Preparing a Syllabus and Policy Sheets

❑ **1** For elementary grades, discuss with students the content of each subject area, instructional approaches, and grading procedures.

❑ **2** At the middle and high school levels, consider giving students a course syllabus with this introductory information.

❑ **3** A course syllabus includes the course title, the title of the textbook, a brief course description, course objectives, a content outline, course requirements, how grades will be calculated, the homework policy, the attendance and tardiness policy, and a listing of the classroom rules and procedures.

❑ **4** Some teachers prefer to have the rules, procedures, and classroom policies in a policy sheet that is separate from the course syllabus.

❑ **5** Because the first day at many schools is not a full day, many teachers postpone distributing the syllabus until the next day. See "Conducting the First Day" on page 54.

Tentative Student Assessment

❑ **1** Prepare some procedures to help you tentatively estimate the students' achievement in major subject areas such as mathematics, spelling, handwriting, written composition, reading, or other areas where prior knowledge or achievement is important. Assessment procedures might include:

- Pre-tests
- Review lessons
- Worksheets
- Oral activities
- Observation checklists
- Work samples

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❑ **2** These assessments will be most practical and valid if they are an integral part of instruction rather than unrelated "tests." That is, spelling and handwriting could be assessed via a review spelling test or a written paragraph, math by problems worked at the blackboard, reading by student oral reading during an assigned selection, etc.

❑ **3** Use the class rosters you made (see page 26) to record the results of your assessment. Use a simple coding system such as:

+ = Above Average

0 = Average

– = Below Average

▶ Compare your assessment data with information in the students' cumulative record folders. Consider discussing any major discrepancies or questions with other teachers.

▶ Begin thinking how you can make use of this information in constructing lesson plans, assignments, and instructional groups.

Determining Your Grading Policy

❑ **1** Consult your school's reporting system before determining your grading policy. You must match your assessment practices and grading system to the school's reporting system.

❑ **2** Consider the ways that you will assess student learning—homework, tests, projects, etc.

❑ **3** Determine the relative weight each assessment approach will carry when you prepare report card grades (e.g., 30% homework, 30% tests, 20% projects, 20% seatwork)

❑ **4** Decide whether to have points, percentages, or letter grades for assessment. All have pros and cons. Discuss this with your mentor and/or colleagues.

❑ **5** Make plans to inform your students of your grading policy.

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❑ **6** Decide how to record information in your gradebook for student achievement, attendance, and conduct.

❑ **7** Have professional yet realistic standards/expectations in assignments, homework, assessment, and grading. Discuss with your mentor and/or colleagues.

Planning for Homework

❑ **1** Determine the purpose of homework in your class and how it will enhance student learning.

- ▶ Decide whether homework will be used to review content previously covered, to examine new content, or a combination.
- ▶ Select an appropriate amount and frequency of homework for the grade level. Talk to other teachers at your grade level to get a perspective about what is reasonable.
- ▶ Do not use homework as punishment.

❑ **2** Determine how homework will fit into your assessment system. (See "Determining Your Grading Policy" on page 46.)

❑ **3** Provide students with guidelines for when and how to complete homework.

- ▶ Designate an area of the chalkboard for displaying all homework assignments and due dates.
- ▶ Plan to discuss your homework procedures with the students.

❑ **4** Select a process for providing feedback and grading homework.

- ▶ Determine ways you will evaluate the homework.
- ▶ Determine how you will handle late work (grade reduction?).
- ▶ Determine what will happen when work is not turned in (after school tutoring, loss of privileges, etc.).

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❑ **5** Formulate a way of assessing daily work that is compatible with the district assessment system (which may include a specific grading system, specially designed report cards, portfolios, and so on).

- ▶ First, find out what other teachers do.
- ▶ Then decide what will be assessed—all daily work or just selected work.

❑ **6** Again, consider how to manage paperwork rather than having it manage you.

Back-Up Activities

❑ **1** Prepare some brief educational activities to use when plans don't take as long as expected, when children finish early, or at the end of the day. Place descriptions of these activities and related materials in a card file or a folder.

❑ **2** These backup activities can be anything from a teacher sharing a story or poem, to finding locations on a map to discussing current events. Or they may include brainteasers, educational games, or other fun activities.

Opening Class Routine

❑ **1** Decide whether you want to have a particular routine to start each class (students sometimes perform better when they know a routine will be used).

❑ **2** Decide how to take attendance, make announcements, and attend to other tasks at the start of the class period.

❑ **3** Some teachers have students work on problems, questions, or vocabulary words while they take care of the other administrative tasks.

❑ **4** Many elementary school teachers use this time for student helpers to take attendance, water plants, check in classroom library books, etc.

Check ✓ when completed

Folder for Substitute Teachers

❑ **1** Start a folder for substitute teachers. Include at least the following:

- ▶ Standard daily schedule, including the names of special teachers (art, music, physical education, library, and so on)
- ▶ Seating chart or class roster with comments about students with special needs
- ▶ A copy of classroom rules, procedures, and expectations
- ▶ Information about taking attendance and lunch count
- ▶ A list of reliable students who can be called on for assistance.
- ▶ A highlighted map of the school with restrooms, cafeteria, teachers' lounge, principal's office, copy machine, etc.
- ▶ A copy of what to do in case of a fire/tornado drill or other emergency
- ▶ The name of a nearby teacher to contact if needed or if they have questions
- ▶ Names of students who leave the room to go to special classes (e.g., learning disabilities classes, instrumental music, speech therapy) and when they should leave and return
- ▶ Names of any aides or paraprofessionals and a description of their general responsibilities
- ▶ Several appropriate activity sheets that could be reproduced quickly and used for seatwork
- ▶ Location of the backup activities folder
- ▶ Include several attendance slips, lunch count sheets, hall passes, and discipline referrals so the substitute teacher doesn't have to search for these.

Note: Before school starts, you may not be able to obtain all the information you need to complete this folder. However, begin the folder now.

PLANNING FOR THE FIRST DAY

A successful first day of school takes a lot of preparation. You can't tell students about everything on the first day so you'll need to decide exactly which information to convey on the first day and which on subsequent days.

But you also need to be concerned about how you interact with students and how you establish and enforce behavioral expectations. Therefore, this section begins with some principles to consider when planning for the first day, followed by actions you could take when you actually conduct the first day of school.

check ✓ when completed

Planning the First Day

Take these planning principles into account as you plan for the first day.

- ❑ **1** Many schools have shortened periods/days the first day of school. Overplan but don't rush, hurry, or cram in too much.
- ❑ **2** Keep a whole-class focus since one large group is often easier to monitor than several small groups.
- ❑ **3** Consider some kind of brief get-acquainted activity, either for the first day or subsequent days.
- ❑ **4** Teach something the first day. Have students do some kind of schoolwork, particularly something that can be sent home. (Emphasize to students to share their work with parents.) Make sure that first-day activities are something at which, all or nearly all, students can succeed.
- ❑ **5** Plan uncomplicated lessons to help students be successful.
- ❑ **6** Be clear when presenting information, giving directions, and stating objectives.
- ❑ **7** Organize the flow of lesson activities to keep things moving.
  - ▶ Get students prepared for the lesson quickly.
  - ▶ Maintain momentum and provide signals for the change of activities.
  - ▶ Minimize confusion during the transition between activities by stating clear expectations for what you want the students to do during the transition time.
- ❑ **8** Maintain student attention.
  - ▶ Get the active attention of all students before starting a lesson.
  - ▶ Monitor students for signs of confusion or inattention.
- ❑ **9** Plan to clearly state your rules, procedures, and academic expectations.

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- ❑ **10** Closely monitor student compliance with rules and procedures, and provide corrective feedback.
- ❑ **11** Stop inappropriate behavior quickly.
- ❑ **12** Be available, visible, and in charge. Move around the room.
- ❑ **13** If you are teaching elementary students:
  - ▶ Plan short lessons—not full-period ones. Follow each by a brief discussion of rules and procedures.
  - ▶ Select your first read-aloud book, preferably short, self-contained, and humorous.
  - ▶ Think about possible indoor recess/noontime activities.

Conducting the First Day

- ❑ **1** Use the sequence of topics listed here flexibly; feel free to re-arrange items to fit your situation.
- ❑ **2** Greet the students.
  - ▶ Stand by the door before class begins.
  - ▶ Welcome students as they enter.
- ❑ **3** Tell students about their seat assignments.
  - ▶ If assigning seats, have students' names on the desks or have a transparency showing where their seats are located.
- ❑ **4** Handle administrative tasks.
- ❑ **5** Take attendance and lunch count.
  - ▶ Devise an easy, quick way to handle these tasks.
- ❑ **6** Make introductions.
  - ▶ Tell students about yourself, personally and professionally.
  - ▶ Consider some get-acquainted activity to have students introduce themselves.

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❑ **7** Introduce the course.

- ▶ Describe the topics of study.
- ▶ Describe typical instructional activities.
- ▶ Show the textbooks.

❑ **8** Present course requirements.

- ▶ If you have prepared a course syllabus, distribute and go over it.
- ▶ Discuss course content, instructional activities, and the means of assessing student performance.

❑ **9** Discuss classroom rules and procedures.

- ▶ Post the rules or have students help formulate several most important ones.
- ▶ Discuss the rules and procedures and the reasons for having them.

❑ **10** Conduct an initial activity.

- ▶ Consider having an interesting, easy activity to deal with some content, possibly review material.

❑ **11** End the class period.

- ▶ Consider establishing a daily routine to end the class period, allowing students time to put papers and supplies away, clean up the work areas, and gather their belongings if they will be leaving the classroom.

After you have become acquainted with the district and school, made management and instructional preparations, decided on procedures and rules, and planned for your first day, then you are ready to prepare the physical layout of your classroom.

Think about the type of classroom environment you would like to create. Your decision about the arrangement of student desks, for example, will be influenced by the type of interaction you want to occur among students. When decorating the room with posters and displays, give attention to function as well as aesthetics.

Your decisions about your classroom and materials will include room identification, desk arrangements, seat selection and nametags, room arrangement, and room decoration.

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Room Identification

- ❑ **1** Post your name, class level, and room number outside your classroom door where students can see them the first day of school. For secondary classes, post your name and class schedule for each hour outside the door.
- ❑ **2** Plan to write some welcoming statement on the chalkboard, such as "Welcome, I'm glad you're here."

Desk Arrangements

- ❑ **1** Decide how to arrange the students' desks (rows, clusters of four desks, U-shaped arrangement, etc.). You may want to consider using traditional rows for the first few weeks. Experienced teachers say this layout leads to the fewest discipline problems.
- ❑ **2** While deciding upon room arrangement, visualize yourself teaching the class in a variety of situations. What works? What is questionable?

Seat Selection and Name Tags

- ❑ **1** Decide whether you will let students choose their seats or whether you will assign the seats. If the latter, write a seating chart in pencil.
- ❑ **2** Consider whether you want name tags affixed to student desks. For classes that change hourly, note cards folded in half with a student's name on one side may be satisfactory. Or prepare a seating chart on a transparency for each hourly class.
- ❑ **3** Some teachers like to have students choose their own seats the first day and/or make their own name tags.
- ❑ **4** For young bus riders, put the bus number on the tags.

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Room Arrangement

❑ **1** Determine your room arrangement. Include:

- ▶ Location of teacher's desk
- ▶ Location of additional furniture, such as file cabinets, display tables, and tables for small-group work
- ▶ Location of teacher supplies and student supplies
- ▶ Computer area
- ▶ Location of other areas, such as an independent reading center, an art corner, science center, etc.

❑ **2** Ask the school secretary about any extra furniture you may want, such as a table for reading groups or science displays, a plant stand, bookcases, a room divider, a portable chalkboard, and a wheeled cart. Obtain any that are available.

Room Decoration

❑ **1** Prepare colorful, attractive bulletin boards.

- ▶ Keep it simple and inexpensive. Use what is available, and check about available school or PTA funds for what you buy.
- ▶ Make bulletin boards functional, not merely decorative. They should solicit student input and relate to material that will be covered the first couple of weeks.
- ▶ Consider ways to lessen the load of preparing bulletin boards by having groups of students take turns preparing one.
- ▶ Consider decorating one bulletin board or wall space with only a border and a title on which you can immediately display students' work.

- ▶ Devote one display area to introducing your students to one another. Title the bulletin board "Who's Who?" On the first day of school, have students make nametags that are posted there.

❑ **2** Decide where to post notices and other information (e.g., class schedule, calendar, homework assignments and due dates, etc.). Prepare these and post them.

❑ **3** Display any pertinent pictures, posters, charts, and maps.

❑ **4** Consider a plant or two and possibly an aquarium.

❑ **5** Don't overdecorate. Many elementary school classrooms have so much on the walls that students are overwhelmed. As the year progresses, remove some items and put up new ones.

❑ **6** Keep room decoration in perspective; don't let it take too much of your time. Instructional and management planning are far more important than room decoration.

THE FINAL CHECK

The big day is upon you. All of your earlier preparations should give you a feeling of confidence that you are prepared for the first day of school. Yet it is natural to still wonder how it will turn out and to be somewhat nervous about meeting the students for the first time.

You will be better prepared and feel more confident about your first day if you have a number of materials ready. And finally, you may want to assess your preparation in a number of areas. Give any areas that need work special attention in the opening weeks of the school year.

If you believe you'd benefit from additional suggestions about the rest of your first year of teaching, consult one or more of the publications in the bibliography section "Beginning the School Year," on page 66.

check ✓ when completed

HAVE THESE MATERIALS READY

- ❑ **1** Your name, class level, and room number are posted outside the classroom.
- ❑ **2** Nametags are affixed to desks, or materials are set up for students to make their own nametags, or directions are displayed to tell students where to sit.
- ❑ **3** Your name and the daily/weekly schedule are posted in the room.
- ❑ **4** Room displays are attractive and welcoming.
- ❑ **5** You have enough books and school supplies for every student.
- ❑ **6** Your lesson plans for the first week of school are on your desk.
- ❑ **7** A complete class roster is on your desk.
- ❑ **8** All teaching materials for the first day's lessons are ready for use.

FINAL CHECK!

Shortly before school starts, assess your preparation in the following areas. Give special attention to areas that need work in the opening weeks of the school year.

	Needs Work	O.K.	Excellent
1. Instructional materials	1	2	3
2. Physical environment	1	2	3
3. Knowledge of students	1	2	3
4. Management skills	1	2	3
5. First several days of lesson plans	1	2	3
6. Long-range plans	1	2	3
7. Assessment procedures	1	2	3
8. Acquaintance with staff, including mentor	1	2	3
9. Familiarity with district/school rules	1	2	3
10. Self-confidence	1	2	3

Relax, look forward to today—and the rest of the year! And reward yourself in some way at the end of the first day or week for a job well begun.

Bibliography for Classroom Management and Related Issues

Beginning the School Year

Bosch, Karen A., & Kersey, Katharine C. 2000. *The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. 138 pages.
Includes five chapters for elementary and middle school teachers. Focuses on getting started, working with parents, time management, and ending the year.

Jonson, Kathleen F. 1997. *The New Elementary Teacher's Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 208 pages.
Includes nine chapters for elementary teachers on topics such as getting acquainted, organizing the classroom, classroom management, lesson plans, discipline, evaluation, parents, and professional development.

Kottler, Ellen; Kottler, Jeffrey A.; & Kottler, Cary J. 1998. *Secrets for Secondary School Teachers: How to Succeed in Your First Year*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 108 pages.
Includes 16 chapters for secondary teachers on such topics as becoming acquainted with the school, organizing the classroom, dressing, the first day, paperwork, lunch, connecting with students, communicating with parents, and dealing with stress.

Moran, Carrol; Stobbe, Judy; Baron, Wendy; Miller, Janette; & Moir, Ellen. 1992. *Keys to the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to the First Month of School*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 187 pages.
Includes seven chapters for elementary teachers on topics such as creating the environment, daily routines, and procedures, the first day of school, activities for the first month, songs, and assessment.

Partin, Ronald L. 1995. *Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide*. West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education. 289 pages.
Includes seven chapters for K-12 teachers on creating a supportive learning environment, creating successful lessons, alternatives to lecturing, building a learning community, searching for educational excellence, effective use of school time, and teaching resources.

Paterson, Kathy. 1993. *Help: Survival Strategies for Teachers*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers. 130 pages.

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Includes seven chapters for elementary teachers on motivating, guiding, communicating, relating, presenting, organizing, and coping.

Rafath, Mary Ann. 1999. *Inspiring Independent Learning*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. 151 pages.
Includes chapters for K-12 teachers. Provides numerous learning strategies, activities, classroom record forms, questionnaires, scoring guides, and a peer tutoring manual.

Ross, Carol. 1994. *Making Your Classroom Work*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers. 115 pages.
Includes eight chapters for elementary teachers on setting up the classroom, classroom routines, homework routines, setting the stage for learning, home and school communication, record keeping, and assessment.

Schorr, Memory Long. 1995. *A Handbook for First Year Teachers*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press. 169 pages.
Includes eight chapters for elementary teachers on topics such as getting ready for the school year, getting to know the students, working with parents, learning centers, and seasonal activities.

Warner, Jack, & Bryan, Clyde. 1995. *The Unauthorized Teacher's Survival Guide.* Indianapolis, IN: Park Avenue Publishers. 178 pages.
Includes 14 chapters for elementary teachers on topics such as fitting in with the staff, rapport with students, parents, extracurricular activities, classroom environment, discipline, stress, supplies, and time management.

Williamson, Bonnie. 1998. *A First-Year Teacher's Guidebook.* 2nd ed. Sacramento, CA: Dynamic Teaching Company. 186 pages.
Includes 18 chapters with an elementary focus on topics such as the first day and week, policies and procedures, classroom management, back-to-school night, report cards, and parent conferences.

Wong, Harry K., & Wong, Rosemary T. 1998. *The First Days of School.* Rev. ed. Mountain View, CA: Harry Wong Publications. 338 pages.
Includes 26 chapters within the following five units for K-12 teachers: basic understandings, positive expectations, classroom management, lesson mastery, and professional development.

Classroom Management and Discipline

Emmer, Edmund T., Evertson, Carolyn M., Clements, Barbara S., & Worsham, Murray E. 2000. *Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers.* 5th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 216 pages.
Includes nine chapters for secondary teachers on room arrangement, rules, procedures, starting the year, instruction, and behavior management. Practical focus.

Evertson, Carolyn M., Emmer, Edmund T., Clements, Barbara S., & Worsham, Murray E. 2000. *Classroom Management for Elementary Teachers.* 5th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 216 pages.
Includes nine chapters for elementary teachers on room arrangement, procedures, starting the year, instruction, and behavior management. Practical focus.

Jones, Vernon F., & Jones, Louise S. 1998. *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems.* 5th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 444 pages.
A comprehensive overview for K-12 teachers in 11 chapters. Sections on foundations of classroom management, positive relationships, motivation, and disruptive behavior.

Kraut, Harvey. 1997. *Teaching and the Art of Successful Classroom Management.* 2nd ed. Washington, DC: National Education Association. 128 pages.
Includes 13 chapters for secondary teachers on topics such as classroom management, the daily lesson, lesson types, and evaluation.

Levin, James, & Nolan, James F. 2000. *Principles of Classroom Management: A Professional Decision-Making Model.* 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 246 pages.
Includes four sections for K-12 teachers on misbehavior and approaches to respond to it, along with ways to prevent misbehavior and manage common and chronic problems.

Weinstein, Carol S. 1996. *Secondary Classroom Management: Lessons from Research and Practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill. 284 pages.
Includes 12 chapters for secondary teachers on the

classroom environment, rules, procedures, cooperation, restoring order, seatwork, groupwork, and other issues.

Weinstein, Carol S., & Mignano, Andrew J. Jr. 1997. *Elementary Classroom Management: Lessons from Research and Practice.* 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. 373 pages.
Includes 12 chapters for elementary teachers on the classroom environment, rules, procedures, cooperation, restoring order, seatwork, groupwork, and other issues.

Motivating Students

Brophy, Jere. 1997. *Motivating Students to Learn*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 206 pages.
Addresses all aspects of motivation in 10 readable chapters. Well referenced, conceptually sound. Many recommended strategies for applying motivational principles.

Burden, Paul R. 2000. *Powerful Classroom Management Strategies: Motivating Students to Learn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
Includes seven chapters for K-12 teachers to guide decision making about instructional tasks, strategies, feedback, and evaluation that promote student motivation to learn. Also includes a chapter on motivating hard-to-reach students. Has a practical classroom perspective.

McCombs, Barbara L., & Pope, James E. 1994. *Motivating Hard to Reach Students*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. 123 pages.
Provides a practical set of guidelines to facilitate the learning process as a means to help students become self-motivated.

Meece, Judith, & McColskey, Wendy. 1997. *Improving Student Motivation: A Guide for Teachers and School Improvement Teams*. Tallahassee, FL: SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE). 98 pages. (345 South Magnolia Dr., Suite D-23, Tallahassee, FL 32301; 800-352-6001)
Provides an overview for engaging students in learning, types of motivation and motivational approaches, strategies for school improvement, and assessing student motivation.

Stipek, Deborah J. 1998. *Motivation to Learn: From Theory to Practice.* 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 272 pages.
Includes 12 chapters designed to demonstrate how achievement motivation theory and research can help teachers develop autonomous, self-confident learners who enjoy learning activities. Well referenced, thorough, has an academic tone.

Sullor, Robert A. 1999. *The Inspiring Teacher: New Beginnings for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. 168 pages.
Includes nine chapters for K-12 teachers that provide information on the latest research in brain-based learning, forming positive alliances with colleagues and parents, resolving conflicts effectively.

If you like **Countdown to the First Day of School**, take a look at these other titles in the NEA Professional Library's Checklist Series:

The Discipline Checklist
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